

Terrence Malick's Cinematic Vision

Toward a Phenomenological Reading of *The Tree of Life* (2011)

黒木天馬（経済学部 4 年）

指導教員：エインジ・マイケル

Terrence Malick (1943-) is an American film director who has directed six films in his career to date: *Badlands* (1973), *Days of Heaven* (1978), *The Thin Red Line* (1998), *The New World* (2005), *The Tree of Life* (2011), and *To the Wonder* (2012).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze Terrence Malick's fifth film, *The Tree of Life* (2011), which won the Golden Palm award at Cannes Film Festival 2011 and was nominated for three Oscars: Best Cinematography, Best Director, and Best Picture in 2011. The interpretation will show how Martin Heidegger's philosophical ideas, especially based on the concept of *Dasein* and its authentic sense of time as Heidegger asserts in his essay "Wilhelm Dilthey's Research and the Struggle for a Historical Worldview (1925)", manifest in the film.

The paper firstly introduces Terrence Malick's background, paying attention to his academic work in philosophy especially in Martin Heidegger, and also takes a look at each of his films briefly. Secondly the paper analyzes *The Tree of Life* closely along with its story line, picking out both visual and auditory characteristics. Thirdly the paper introduces frameworks which film critics have found applicable to Malick's films such as "poetic", "religious", and "Heideggerian". Finally the paper focuses on the function of the camera and justifies prioritizing Heidegger as a framework for understanding *The Tree of Life*. As a result of the close reading, the paper clarifies Malick's intention to diffuse the direction of the story by using almost abstract cutting and thematic editing with mixture of diegetic and non-diegetic sounds.

The paper concludes that various religious themes of the film, which are symbolized especially by quotations from the Book of Job, are merely one aspect of Malick's metaphysical theme in the film. *The Tree of Life* should be read in broader context than in just religious considering the fact that the doctrine of Christianity insists on the essence of good and evil first and based on the essence the existence comes into being in this world.

This is contradictory to the truth implied by Malick's use of the camera as a device to confirm existence without insisting on essence.

Then the paper interprets *The Tree of Life* as a phenomenological film in which the protagonist Jack (Sean Penn) struggles to explore the meaning of his existence, which embodies the process of confirming the meaning of existence as Heidegger describes in his essay. *Dasein* authentically lives in the past, the present and the future at the same time. Malick embodies Heidegger's authentic sense of time for *Dasein* by the protagonist's grand time journey in the film.